

Paul's Great Passion for His People
Romans 9:1 - 5

¹I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit— ²I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. ⁵Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

A Christian heritage can be good. We can enjoy many blessings and joys from a Christian background. But the Christian faith is never inherited. One's Christian background does not enable him to stand righteously before God. Indeed, as some have noted "heritage counts for nothing without Christ."

Paul began chapter nine by declaring "I speak the truth in Christ." He claimed that his words were truthful, with the authority of Christ standing behind those words. He went on to say that the Holy Spirit confirmed the truth of his message. In verse 2, Paul said he took no joy in delivering this message to his fellow countrymen, his fellow Jews. Indeed, he was gripped with sorrow. Stuningly, Paul said in verse 3 that he would give up his salvation and allow himself to be cursed and cut off from Christ so that Israel might come to Christ, embrace the gospel and be saved. Stern words!! Imagine caring so deeply about someone or some group of people that you would relinquish your salvation for them.

David Jeremiah said that Paul's testimony was strong, solemn, sincere and Spirit-filled. How else could he speak? Eternity was hanging in the balance for so many who refused Christ and His gift of salvation. The intensity and emotion with which Paul wrote, no doubt, caught the attention of his readers. He fired a shot in the air or a shot across the bow so that his readers would know to take his words seriously and thoughtfully.

Throughout chapter nine, Paul dealt with the relationship between God and Israel in the aftermath of Christ and His coming to earth. All of the Old Testament was a prelude or a precursor to the coming of Jesus. The evidence of Christ is found throughout the Law, prophets and writings.

There can be no doubt that God's purposes in Israel were to prepare the Jews and ultimately the world for the salvation found in Jesus.

In verses 4-5, Paul briefly reviewed the rich and wonderful spiritual heritage that the Jews enjoyed. And this heritage was his heritage too. He had grown up with the same privileges and blessings. God had blessed them with revelation, His Word and His presence. If the Jews failed to see the hand of God in the gospel, it was not God's fault. He had done everything necessary to prepare the descendants of Abraham for their Messiah. David Jeremiah noted that *"no other nation on earth received promises from God like those received by Israel."* Throughout his life and missionary work, Paul pleaded with his fellow Jews to see the truth and light of God in the gospel. At the end of verse 5, Paul noted for his fellow Jews that the Messiah of the world came from them! The human ancestry of Christ extends back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When it comes to heritage and privileges, David Jeremiah noted two important points for us to consider, especially in light of today's Scripture. *"The privileges of Israel, and the passion of Paul, leave us with two points to ponder: First, the inadequacy of our privileges. Privileges apart from Christ have no merit before God. If God set aside the privileges of His own chosen people because they rejected Christ, where does that leave the rest of us? Second, the inadequacy of our passion. Seeing Paul's broken heart for his countrymen should kindle the fires of passion in our own hearts for the lost around us."*

We can be grateful for our privileges and spiritual heritage, but equally careful not to rest upon such things. May they inspire us to do all that we can to share the faith we have in Christ and be not ashamed of the gospel.

Applications . . .

1. Give thanks for the spiritual heritage of your past and for those God used to shape your life and faith.
2. Look for ways you can be unashamed of the gospel. Where can you live, speak and serve so the gospel is shared?
3. Ask God to remove any confidence you have placed in privileges and things and to relocate that confidence to Christ alone.